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Youth center lacks approval

By P.J. Lassek World Staff Writer
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Residents say there are too many social services in the neighborhood.

A recent announcement that a California-based Christian group was turning a north Tulsa mansion into a home for troubled youths is raising questions among city officials and others. "I knew when I read this in the Sunday newspaper it wasn't right," said Jeannie McDaniel, with the Mayor's Office for Neighborhoods. "I knew we had to look into it right away on Monday. And when Monday came, we were inundated with calls from residents in the area," McDaniel said. Evangelist Maxine Bronner, president of Outreach Mission Inc. of Rialto, Calif., has not sought the proper approval from the city to open such a facility. She purchased the home at 585 W. Fairview St. on Aug. 19. Such a facility requires a special exception from the City Board of Adjustment, said Assistant City Attorney Mike Romig. The Board of Adjustment rejected a request from Shirley Lamb Ministries to renovate a mansion at 506 W. Fairview St. for a 24-hour "Christian restoration center for broken people." "We have notified Bronner that she needs to seek the approval before opening," Romig said.



"We may have a situation of the cart before the horse." A zoning notice explaining the approval steps was sent to Bronner's organization July 27, but Bronner said she did not receive it. A second notice was faxed to her Monday. Bronner held an Aug. 22 press conference announcing that the Springer mansion, also

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known as the Fairview Mansion, would be converted into the Tulsa Outreach Youth Center for "at-risk boys." She brought 12 adjudicated children from her California youth center to the Tulsa press conference. The youths returned to California on Saturday.

Bronner said she will donate the mansion to her nonprofit Outreach Missions Inc. Bronner said she is confident the Tulsa youth center will open.

"I have been commissioned by the Lord to do this," Bronner said Friday. "These kind of children need a place. I'm helping every person in this city by saving kids as they grow." Bronner said she wants to work with the "hard-core" kids that are adjudicated in Oklahoma. "Give me the worst kind. I do my best work with them. I specialize in a sex-offender program," Bronner said.

Neighborhood residents oppose such a facility because they think the area is already saturated with social service entities.

The mansion is just north of the downtown area where the new Tulsa Jail, The Salvation Army, Day Center for the Homeless, John 3:16 Mission, Avalon pre-release correctional center, two state-operated group homes and several other social service outreach programs are located. A recent city ordinance prohibits such facilities from being located within a quarter-mile from one another without special exceptions. The new ordinance exempts facilities already in existence around the new jail.

Tim Lovell, president of the Brady Heights Neighborhood Association, said communities should have social service entities, "but they should be spread out evenly throughout neighborhoods, not situated in just one area."

Richard Rich, a member of the Owen Park Neighborhood Association, said, "We have more than our fair share of social services. We are opposed to this and will fight it."

Lovell and Rich said they first learned of Bronner's plans for the mansion in last Sunday's newspaper.

Lovell said the Brady Heights area is in the midst of a revitalization effort and adding another shelter would hurt the effort.

McDaniel said when dealing with the location of these type of facilities, "it is a matter of keeping the integrity of the residential area."

Bronner said criticism will come no matter how successful her program is.

"I'm the right one the Lord chose for this. I can take the beating," Bronner said.

Bronner said Friday she will only have 12 to 15 youths at the center, not the up to 100 children reported in last Sunday's newspaper.

Romig said he is concerned about discrepancies in Bronner's description of who would be housed at the center. In applications to government agencies and non-profit groups, she has said she is housing only boys, only girls, some young adults and possibly boys and girls. Bronner said her expertise is in dealing with boys, but that she is not sure what gender will be housed at the center.

"What I know is that it will be a center for children that need love and guidance and have no place to go," she said.

Bronner said it was Carlton Pearson, minister at Higher Dimensions Family Church, who persuaded her to bring her program to Tulsa.

Higher Dimensions Pastor Phil Fields said the church has only a support role with Bronner. "We applaud the effort. But we are not running the home. She runs the home," Fields said.

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By P.J. Lassek World Staff Writer

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